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FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM AMBASSADOR ASHE

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR ECON MARR PL

SUBJECT: YOUR JUNE 8 VISIT TO POLAND AND MEETING WITH
PRESIDENT LECH KACZYNSKI

REF: 2006 WARSAW 159

Classified By: Ambassador Victor Ashe, for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Mr. President. The Polish people and government, as well as I and my entire staff, are looking forward to your June 8 visit as a sign of the importance you attach to our close partnership with Poland, and for the boost it will give the relationship as we embark on negotiations to place a Missile Defense interceptor site in Poland. While this is your third official visit, it will be the first time President Kaczynski will host you, and he is very pleased that you have accepted his invitation to visit the presidential retreat at Jurata on the Baltic Sea. There will be a very different set of expectations for this visit than for your February 2006 meeting, which President Kaczynski understood to be primarily about your getting to know one another. I believe President Kaczynski will keep the discussion on the strategic level, but the fact that we will have begun Missile Defense negotiations adds new texture to any meeting.

¶2. (C) In the 15 months since you hosted President Kaczynski in Washington in February 2006, he has grown more comfortable and confident in his role, and after several serious early missteps, has become more adept at balancing his strong and easily offended sense of national pride with his understanding of the need for Poland to play a leading role in the EU, especially with regard to EU-Russia relations. He and his team have worked hard in recent months to repair early mistakes, especially in relations with Germany, efforts that culminated in a successful visit (also to Jurata) by German Chancellor Angela Merkel in March. This progress has strengthened Poland's voice in the EU, particularly with regard to dealing with Russia on a range of difficult issues, from energy security to Russia's politically motivated ban on Polish meat, to Missile Defense.

¶3. (C) President Kaczynski has undertaken an active schedule of foreign travel and has welcomed numerous foreign leaders here, often in advance of our shared agenda of advancing democracy and stability in this region and in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has encouraged Ukrainian leaders to pursue a pro-western outlook and lobbied the EU and NATO to keep the door open for Ukrainian participation. He has similarly supported Georgian President Saakashvili as he asserts Georgia's right to deepen its ties to the west, all the while counseling him not to be provocative toward Russia. He has not, however, been able to find the right formula for a summit meeting with Russian President Putin. And, despite Kaczynski's active schedule of travel and visits, his engagement in foreign policy remains generally at the level of symbolism; and the lack of an experienced senior foreign

policy advisor on his staff is reflected in his spotty engagement.

¶4. (C) What you will find unchanged is President Kaczynski's deep sense of loyalty and his commitment to Poland's relationship with the United States as its primary partner. We saw evidence of this in his unwavering commitment to Iraq and his swift decision in November 2006 to send additional troops to Afghanistan ready to serve without caveats. When you announced the new Iraq strategy in January and General Petraeus implemented the Baghdad security plan, many insurgents fled south, increasing pressure on the coalition bases Poland commands. The new Defense Minister's clear instructions that Polish troops shift their tactics to aggressively engage those insurgents provided direct support to General Petraeus's efforts. In the context of these and other deployments, including to Lebanon and Kosovo, President Kaczynski will raise his hope that the U.S. will renew its support for transforming and modernizing Poland's Armed Forces, improving their ability to operate with us in the field. I and my team have been working to ensure President Kaczynski's expectations are not unrealistically high, but he will want to be reassured that we will continue to work with Poland to modernize its armed forces as part of our broad security relationship.

¶5. (C) Missile Defense will be one of President Kaczynski's top concerns, and in your discussion of Missile Defense you will almost certainly see flashes of the President's deep national pride and his sense of Poland's insecurity, as well as his somewhat narrow field of vision regarding Poland's strategic interests. These negotiations represent the first time in its difficult history of invasion and occupation that Poland will agree voluntarily to a foreign military base on its soil. Russian saber-rattling over the base makes the

Polish leadership and ordinary citizens nervous. You will want to listen to President Kaczynski's concerns and assure him that a Missile Defense site in Poland will enhance and not endanger Polish national security, and that it complements, and does not compete with NATO plans. His advisors say he will almost certainly raise his desire for a bilateral defense pact as part of the Missile Defense basing agreement. He will need to be reassured that NATO's Article 5 remains our solid commitment to Poland's defense, and that we will consider Poland's national security needs in the Missile Defense discussions.

¶6. (C) Energy security and reducing Poland's heavy dependence on Russian gas and oil is a top priority for President Kaczynski. He will offer his assessment of Russia's role in the region, and seek our assistance in providing for Poland's and Europe's energy security. We have worked closely with the Poles over many months to advance market-based solutions that provide for diversity in Poland's energy sources, and you will want to press the need for Poland to look to the market, as well as to political efforts, in this field.

¶7. (C) President Kaczynski, like his brother Jaroslaw, the Prime Minister, remains heavily focused on domestic politics, seeking to advance his Law and Justice (PiS) party's agenda of rooting out the remnants of communism, ending corruption, and building a strong center right party based on these principles and conservative social values. Visas, emigration, and the concerns of Polish-Americans naturally fit into that domestic focus, as these are issues that impact thousands, if not millions, of ordinary people. Poles were very pleased with your November 2006 speech in Tallinn in which you pledged to work with Congress find a new formula for the Visa Waiver Program. They hope Congress will act. President Kaczynski is also concerned with the fate of the many Poles living in the U.S., both legally and illegally. He is likely to raise with you his hope that a path to legal residency can be opened for those without documentation, and that our two countries can soon reach agreement on a Social Security Totalization Agreement to allow pensioners full benefits wherever they retire. The latter project is already

underway, with the next round of negotiations scheduled for Warsaw in September, but President Kaczynski may want to hear your assessment of the chances for immigration reform this year.

18. (C) In order to build a majority coalition, the President and Prime Minister forged a governing coalition with two fringe parties--the agrarian populist Self Defense (SO) and Catholic nationalist League of Polish Families (LPR)--who do not support the President's foreign policy priorities and are also problematic for us because of their associations with anti-Semitic individuals and organizations, and because of their populist approaches to foreign investment. I suggest you take advantage of any reference Kaczynski makes to the difficulties he has with this turbulent coalition to express appreciation for the fact that he has not allowed them to influence Poland's commitment to Iraq and Afghanistan, nor to derail Missile Defense discussions. You may also want, in this context, to encourage Kaczynski to help keep American investment in Poland strong and thus help keep Poland's economy growing by avoiding populist legislation that would reverse Poland's long-standing pro-investment policies. If the opportunity presents itself, you should also praise Kaczynski's dedication to improving Poland's dialogue with its Jewish diaspora, which is heavily represented in the U.S., and express the hope that Poland will finally pass property restitution legislation to provide a small measure of justice to those who lost so much in the Holocaust and World War II.

19. (C) Mr. President, My team and I are very pleased you will be in Poland. Presidency Kaczynski and many ordinary Poles cherish our close relations. Although he may approach the meeting with somewhat exaggerated expectations, and may raise some proposals that are impossible, his requests are based on a deep sense of loyalty to the relationship and to Poland's commitment to our partnership. Your visit will give a boost to the Missile Defense negotiations and help keep Poland's commitment to Iraq and Afghanistan strong in these difficult times, and will help us move forward to an even deeper partnership.

ASHE